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THE ART POSSIBILITIES OF STOVES.

ANOTHER winter is approaching and we have not heard that the manufacturers of stoves have been doing anything to redeem the conventional hideousness of that very American article of furniture. In the ordinary city house, this seemingly inevitable eyesore shares with the average mantelpiece of bad design the unenviable distinction of annulling whatever improvement in the general decoration of the room the artistic taste of the tenant may have brought about. A bad mantelpiece may be partly concealed by curtains or a lambrequin; the unsightly black iron grating through which the heated air from the furnace enters the room may be made less unsightly by bronzing. But what can one do to overcome the aggressive ugliness of the average American stove? That the stove is not necessarily an unsightly object it is hardly necessary to say to any one who has travelled in Germany and seen how graceful in outline and inlaid with soft colored tiles, it is often the most decorative thing in the room. The examples of old-time stoves given in our illustrations remind us how in ages past it was a thing of beauty, and the medium sometimes for the exhibition of elaborate industrial art-work. The first half of the nineteenth century will probably be marked in history as the period of the greatest debasement in domestic art since the days of barbarism, and the American stove, with its bad form and inartistic iron castings, may justly stand as its worst exemplar.

In England the bad iron work of the fire-place has hitherto been confined to the kitchen range. Lately there has been much talk there of introducing the stove into the dwelling-room after the American fashion. It is rather odd that just as the cheerful English open fireplace is being revived in the United States, the cheerless American stove should find advocates in England. We cannot think that the change will be popular. There is the chance, however, that the stove may receive at the hands of our British cousins something of the improvement which has been bestowed by them lately on all other articles of domestic furniture, and by this means we may perhaps get at second-hand what our native manufacturers apparently are incapable of originating. That the foremost artists of England may not find it beneath their dignity to design for this branch of manufacture we are encouraged to hope by the recollection that no less a master than Mr. E. J. Poynter designed the picturesque cooking range in the "grill room" in the refreshment department of the South Kensington Museum.

The German and Swedish tile stoves have many advantages over the American metal articles. In his official report, Mr. William P. Blake, United States Commissioner to the Paris Exhibition of 1878, speaks very highly of them. The Rörstrand works, he says, showed some with unusually large open fronts, permitting the fires to be seen. One, in mediæval style, was fitted up with a pyramidal retreating back. Another stove, of cylindrical form, intended to stand out in the room, separate from the wall, was enameled light blue and gilt. One of the wall stoves was of black enamel. Another very interesting display of stoves of this description, and particularly of the tiles in great variety, was made by Bernhard Erndt (court potter), Vienna. The patterns of his tiles are peculiarly attractive, many being deeply recessed and enameled in bright colors—brown, green, blue, white, and variegated. The stoves and stove tiles made in Berlin are in high repute, and are even imported to Vienna.

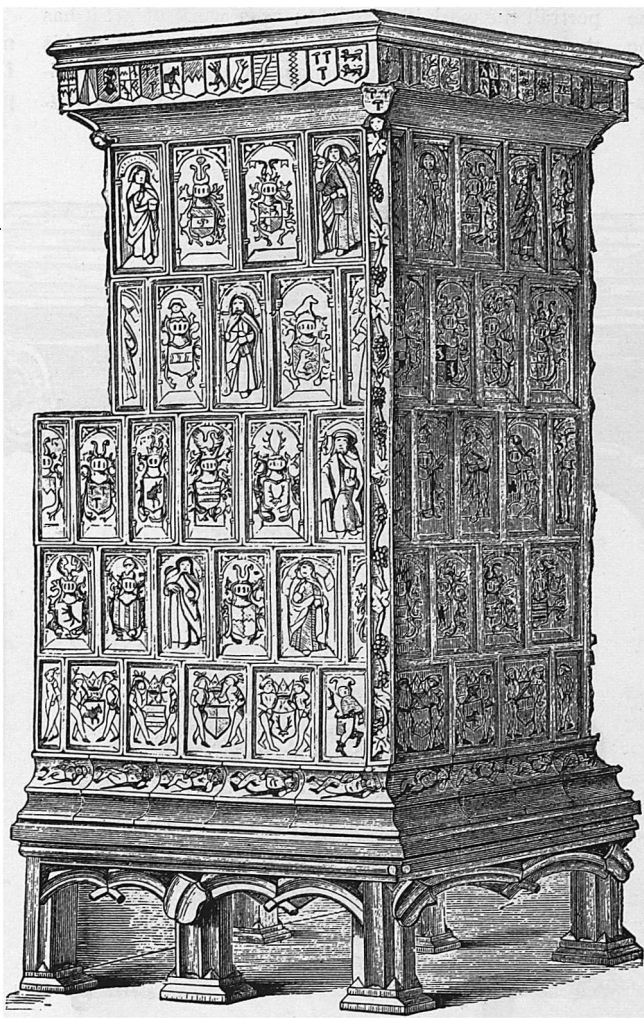
The following are some of the merits Mr. Blake accords to the "porcelain" stoves, as compared with the ordinary cast or sheet iron stoves for heating apartments: 1. Not being good conductors of heat, they radiate it slowly and without sudden changes; and being bulky, they retain heat for a long time, and maintain an equable, moderate temperature in the apartment, even long after the fire has burned out. 2. They do not scorch and "burn the air," or the floating particles of dust in it, as is the case with highly heated metallic stoves. 3. They combine to a great degree the advantages of an open fire-place and of a stove, giving ventilation, permitting the fire to be seen, while most of the heat is utilized, being stored up in the mass

of the tiles and slowly radiated. Doubtless such stoves would fail to satisfy those who require a red-hot surface, superheated air, and little ventilation; but many improvements might be made, so that all the heat which wholesome conditions require could be obtained without difficulty and with great economy.

The material of the so-called "porcelain" or German stoves, is not porcelain, but earthenware, moulded into tiles or hollow bricks about six or eight inches square, and several inches thick. They are made in a great variety of ornamental forms, and are generally glazed on the outer or exposed face, either white—which is most common—or brown, red, green, or black.

BOUDOIR PICTURES.

ONE of the unique volumes found by Mr. J. W. Bouton during his visit to England this summer, is a large folio labelled "Macklin's Poets." It has no letter-press, but consists of twenty-five very carefully hand-colored stipple engravings of the pretty Bartolozzi sort, the edges all scrupulously—or shall we say unscrupulously?—trimmed away after the fashion of our grandmothers, who did not believe in wide margins,



OLD GERMAN APOSTLE STOVE.

and neatly mounted on heavy paper. The plates, in subject, are mostly of the sentimental kind much favored by young ladies of a past generation. The volume under consideration may not belong to the realm of fine art; but there is a certain meretricious beauty in an harmoniously colored print of this soft, sensuous kind which is so undeniably attractive that there is not one of us who would not delight to turn the leaves of this book on the drawing-room table. There is a fashionable demand just now in England for colored plates of this kind, for framing. If we owned "Macklin's Poets," we think we would cut it up and make the ladies of our acquaintance happy at Christmas with pictures for their rooms. How very charming a dado composed of these plates would be for a boudoir or a drawing-room!

THE "Queen Anne stove-screen," lately introduced in England, consists of a curtain supported by two brass uprights and a cross-bar, each having a telescopic action, so that the screen can be adjusted to the width or height of the fireplace. After having done duty during summer as a fireplace screen, it can be turned to account in winter as a fire-screen.

WHAT ORNAMENT SHOULD BE.

ALL true ornament is distinguished by repetition, symmetry, and alternation. A rhythmical balance of parts is an essential to effective ornament, and was strongly insisted upon by the late Owen Jones in his standard work on the subject. It is a quality that was apparently ignored by the Japanese artists, and it would be interesting could we know how Owen Jones would have reconciled their work with his rules. Lecturing on this subject before the Royal Institution, Mr. H. H. Statham said that ornament was not produced by drawing a series of irregular scratches or even isolated curves on a given surface; but if these scratches, lines, or curves conformed to a fixed plan, the production of ornament could hardly be avoided. The elementary forms might be considerably varied, and the result would be rendered more pleasing so long as the variation was based upon some geometrical form, perhaps rudely worked out. There must be, to some extent, a geometric symmetry, although this need not be very apparent. Much of the ornament which appeared to have little law except its own sweet will was capable of reduction to a rule, and owed its value to conformity to this set scheme. However unequal the ornament might be, there must be a clear relation between its distribution and the space it occupied, a law governing the use of ornament being that the ornament must appear not only to fit, but to occupy, the space in which it was placed, so as to show it was intended for that position.

Curves played a large part in ornament, and often they were drawn in an unscientific manner. A universal law was that all curves, whether springing from other curves or from straight lines, should be struck at a tangent to the lines from which they diverged, and when curves conformed to this rule the effect was agreeable and natural, and when it was departed from the effect was weak and crippled, because the lines would appear to cut through one another, whether continued to that point or not. Further, in two designs of leaves springing from common bases, that in which the stems ended parallel to each other would look better than that in which they approached one another; for in the latter the mental effect would be to continue the lines so as to intercept each other. The effect of these qualities of rhythm, repetition, geometrical symmetry, alternation, equal distribution of spaces, and proper relation of curve to curve made up what might be termed abstract ornament.

Ornament should not attempt to imitate nature directly; but a large class of genuine ornament was based upon the adaptation of natural forms. There was also a beautiful class of ornament not derived from these forms, and which might be distinguished as "abstract" ornament. In the decorative work of all savage nations a great proportion of the ornament was produced by filling up the space treated with simple lines, having little meaning or purpose in themselves. This abstract ornament might be traced in a higher form in Egyptian art, and reached its greatest development of perplexity and mystery in Saracenic art, in which a puzzling and complicated effect was produced by the shifting and rearrangement of a few lines. The familiar Greek key pattern was in like manner a collocation of squares, with one side cut away, interwoven with one another. One of the most intricate Saracenic patterns was a series of concentric hexagons, slightly tilted. Ornament could be produced not only by drawing on a surface, but by varying that surface so as to produce an alternation of light and shade. Ornament derived from nature, while it must not imitate, might have various degrees of approach to, nature, governed in their nearness of likeness to a considerable extent by the nature of the material and medium worked in. Thus in crewel work, exact symmetry should be avoided, and the imitation of nature might be comparatively near, but ornament to be placed on a building should be architecturalized. A leading reason against the attempt to precisely copy nature was that in most media it could not be done successfully; the direct effort to reproduce a flower in carving only called attention to the absence of the delicacy, the finish, the fragility of

the natural form. Again, such minutely-copied work violated the necessity for fitness for its space and purpose.

The principle governing growth in nature must be observed in ornament. For example, as in actual life, all curve must spring in the same direction, whether flowing from right or left of a central stem, and it was an obvious mistake to repeat the trailing festoons, so appropriate in Renaissance decoration for a wall surface, upon a ceiling. The grotesque did not suggest a misuse or degradation of the subject, and might be more boldly employed. The use of grotesque animals upon jugs or other domestic vessels is almost universal throughout the world. The imitation of artificial objects was invariably bad, because it brought back the mind to every-day matters, and it was generally a proof that it was introduced to save trouble and thought. Artificial objects were very frequently used in Roman and Renaissance work, and also in a great deal of the work by Grinling Gibbons, which was often very faulty in conception, although admirably executed.

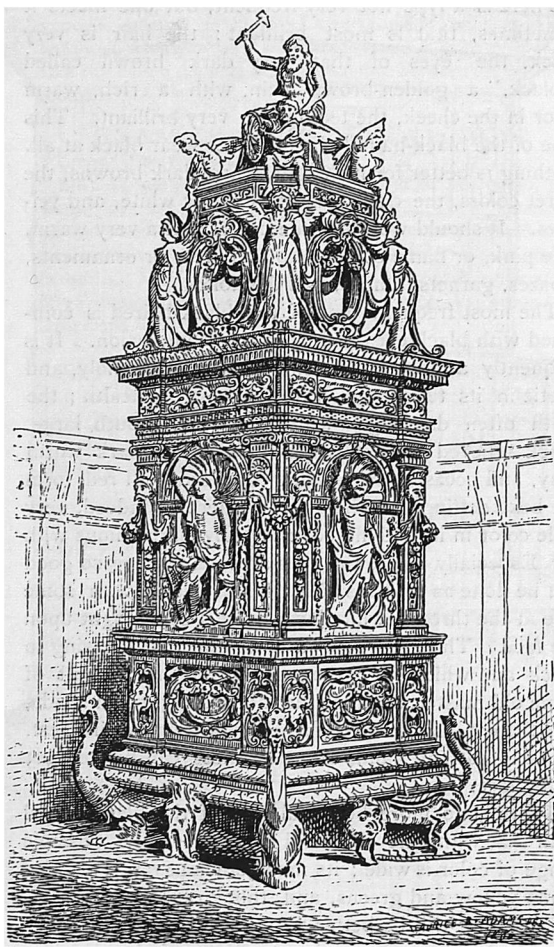
THE STORY OF A MANTEL-PIECE.

MR. H. J. COOPER, the ingenious and entertaining contributor to the columns of our London contemporary *The Artist*, who not long ago told how he had utilized an old oak four-post bedstead to build up "a very creditable chimney-piece," has since achieved something even more remarkable. He has taken the body of an old pianoforte, out of which he has formed "rather more than the nucleus of a mantel-piece and overpiece." We give in a somewhat abridged form his amusing narrative, with some characteristically discursive remarks on decoration in general:

"Lest this recital should tempt any reader, in a burst of enthusiasm, to set about a similar performance, allow me to say it is not every piece of furniture that will adapt itself to distinctly different circumstances and requirements. A dining-table would hardly lend itself to chameleon transformations, neither would your brougham, nor indeed an ordinary cottage or grand pianoforte. The pianoforte that yielded so kindly to my treatment was of a good old-fashioned school, having been made nearly a century ago; and exulted in a glory of its own, quite apart from its merits as an instrument of music. To begin with, it was a colossal edifice, as big as a huge wardrobe, having tall 'wings' on either side opening as cupboards, and surmounted by gilded and reeded domes reminding you of the minarets of Constantinople. Moreover, it was bedecked with a looking-glass, so that the performer could observe herself while playing. The 'case' was of richly colored mahogany, toned down by age to the condition of fine tortoise-shell, and relieved by gilding. It is to be hoped the musical portion of this remarkable creation was renowned at one time for quality, since it certainly could not boast of quantity, the compass being about four and a half octaves. At this time, however, it must have reached its threescore years and ten, for the notes were weary and decrepit. Much care and labor have been expended on the central portion, that which abutted on the key-board, and here the workmanship is exceptionally fine. Two small cupboards with miniature doors divided into six panels each, with delicate mouldings, stand on either side the range of ivory keys. Well-proportioned slender columns with bases and capitals of finely chased and lacquered brass support the entablature. A row of diminutive dentils runs along the frieze, and below the columns is a plinth in graduated steps. A gallery of exquisitely turned balusters (of which I count sixty-seven, hardly seven-eighths inch tall and five-sixteenths inch broad in the thickest part), stretches from door to door above the 'breakfront' cornice, and forms a secure protecting rail for a few slender vases on the shelf thus provided. Silvered plate glass fills the space between the cupboards, and above the gallery there are three larger pieces of glass, a broad centre-piece and two side-slips, with arched heads, and framed in the same tortoise-shell colored mahogany.

"Such was the salvage I rescued, perhaps from the fate of the auction room, and applied as a chimney *étagère*. An old wooden frame, carved and reeded in severe Grecian style, was unearthed from a dusty corner of a workshop and duly cleaned up and gilt, after

being fitted round the outside of the mahogany mirror. Those who study the frames of pictures will be aware that there is a great difference in the softness and richness of gilded wood over gilded composition or 'carton-pierre.' This, and a pair of bracketed side-pieces, gave the finishing touches, and my mirror was complete. In due time I had the bitter sweetness of pulling down a white marble chimney piece to make way for one in dark Spanish mahogany that should be more in consonance with the now silent relic that aforesaid resounded with gay and festive, or, it may be, plaintive strains. I say the 'bitter sweetness,' because, first, I had the bitterness of only realizing a quarter the value of the marble mantel piece; and, secondly, I had the pleasure of bidding adieu to as execrable a bit of de-based cutting as ever spoiled fair marble. I remember when a boy assisting the cook to make some pastry, and being very much annoyed with the want of taste displayed in the fashioning of some leaves with which she was about to adorn the crust. So I suggested an improvement, and set to work to cut and mould some leaves and flowers of an entirely superior type, and that should more creditably represent nature. But by the time I had done, the sculptured dough was woefully black, and I much fear I had not even the melancholy satisfaction of baking it for my own consumption. The



OLD DUTCH TERRA-COTTA STOVE.

moral is that in decorations for pastry you cannot be too lighthanded and expeditious, but in the carving of marble or stone surely something more than the pastry-cook's art is essential! And yet how much of the chiselling on our domestic fireplaces is no better!

"A series of graceful festoons and pendants runs along the fascia of my mahogany mantel piece, cut sharply in the wood and then gilded; not applied, that is stuck on. The color of course is an orange-ruby tone, not the usual color of mahogany, which is difficult to blend with most other tints. The upright jambs have four or five flat broad hollows, not deeply sunk, and a small semicircular shelf near the top, on a corbelled bracket. A slip of black marble, an inch and a half wide, protects the edge of the wood from the heat of the fire. The interior open space is lined with small square tiles, four inches by four inches, of tones of olive and gold-green, in fact in tint like nothing so much as the varied shades to be seen in a basket of greengages. These contrast perfectly with the deep colored mahogany. A connecting link between the mantel-piece and the tiled opening is supplied by a kerb fender of rich red-brown glazed tile, made in short lengths and pieced together by cement, and fastened to the floor in the same manner. This makes a clean

compact fender or guard, and to your housemaid it is a gift from the gods, as it never gets out of condition. A shallow fender stool is carried round this tile plinth, and its covering of peacock blue velvet, albeit a color that has got itself into much disrepute, gives a tone to the whole, and completes the harmony. In winter, the fire in the small standing 'dog' grate is softly reflected in the tiles below and on either side, while in summer the grate is removed and the interior given up to ferns and grasses, a cineraria, spreading palms, and of course a couple of tall lilies on either side. These are arranged in shallow glass 'table' dishes filled with earth and covered over with mosses, and are a source of much trouble and delight. The flowering plants are difficult to keep alive and vigorous, but hardy green plants have, I think, a more pleasant sociable look in summer than most of the contrivances—Japanese sunshades, peacock feather screens stuck into china toads, æsthetic chimney boards, embroidered draperies and what not.

"The cosiest of friends in winter, the steel grate appeals to few sympathies in summer time, and is simply out of place, not wanted, except as a very necessary means of ventilation, pending the enlightened action of builders in this respect; I allude of course to the chimney opening. There is no need, in an open fireplace, to push the plants far under the chimney; they can well stand in front and get both light and air. About the evils arising from the exhalations from plants, and their absorption of oxygen, there seem to be different opinions, and I leave scientists to fight this out. The last account I read of a learned physician's house which had been fitted up on the latest hygienic principles—no carpets, no curtains, varnished walls and no dust whatever—suggested the reflection whether life was indeed worth living."

A WONDERFUL DECORATIVE PROCESS.

"EIDOGRAFIE" is the name given to a process invented by Professor A. F. Eckhardt, a German chemist. According to the inventor, "silken cushions, such as ladies have been accustomed to spend weeks in embroidering from designs in colored silk, are decorated elegantly by the pencil of the 'eidographist' in a few hours, and the work is done in metal, which will not wear off, as the silk of embroidery does. Instead of the expensive stained-glass windows used in churches, windows decorated by the 'eidographic' process can be employed, producing similar effects, and at a comparatively nominal cost. Wooden ware can be embellished by the same process, as can paper, metal, ivory, leather, wire screens, and any solid surface. The designs being in solid metal, and the brilliant coloring a compound part of the metal, the decorative work is permanently fixed, and will last as long as the material upon which it is placed." The worker in eidographie is supplied with a number of pencils containing the metal which Professor Eckhardt has compounded, and the composition of which is his secret, in a fluid form. It is said that every known color can be produced. The moment the fluid meets the air, upon issuing from the pencil, it hardens and becomes a metal, adhering so closely to the material upon which it is laid that it cannot be removed without breaking. One of the uses to which eidographie is capable of being applied is said to be the production of copper and steel plates for engraving. The design is first made by the new process, and a negative is then taken. The labor of engraving is thus saved. This is all very wonderful. We hope it is true.

SOME hints in *The London Guardian* to ladies who decorate churches for harvest festivals might be applied to decorations at the time of our Thanksgiving celebrations, although with a little reservation perhaps. At harvest festivals, only esculents should find place in church decorations. Our Thanksgiving Day was originally the English harvest festival transplanted by our Puritan ancestors. Now it is made the occasion for rejoicing over the general prosperity of the country. *The Guardian* says: "Cereals of all kinds give rich if not high color, and interesting form. The foliage of the common carrot is decorative in the highest degree, in its autumnal tints and shadings; and these tints it is which, at a harvest thanksgiving, should most appropriately prevail. Asparagus foliage is airy and